Cryochem, Inc

EPA Region 3
Pennsylvania
Berks County
Worman

EPA ID# PAD002360444

Last Update: August 2002

17th Congressional District

Other Names: None

Current Site Status

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) completed construction of the groundwater pump and treat system in September 1998. This system, which is cleaning the groundwater at the Cryochem site, has been in permanent operation since early 2000. There has been a steady decrease in the levels of the five contaminants of concern since the system began operating. Of the 28 residences and businesses initially monitored in the sampling program, only 12 remain due to contaminant levels still above the maximum allowed under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Currently, Consent Decree negotiations are underway between EPA and the parties potentially responsible for the contamination. In addition, EPA is cooperating with the state on a methyl tertiarybutyl ether (MTBE) contamination cleanup that is in the site area.

Site Description

The 19-acre site, located in Earl Township, Berks County,

Pennsylvania, has operated as a metals fabrication facility since 1962. The facility is composed of several production and storage buildings and an office complex located in the lower part of the property. The company uses solvents to clean finished metal parts, and any excess solvent is collected in shop drains. Prior to 1982, an organic solvent was used to remove a dye that was applied to welded connections to check for weld integrity. Excess solvent was placed in the shop drain system, which discharged into nearby surface waters that lead to Manatawny Creek. There are several residences within 1/4- mile of the site. The population within a three-mile radius is approximately 1,100 and is solely dependent on ground water as a drinking water supply. A series of environmental samples collected between 1981 and 1985 found organic chemicals in an on-site production well and in nearby residential wells. Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from former solvent disposal practices are the chemicals of concern.

Site Responsibility

This site is being addressed through Federal/State/Local and potentially responsible parties' actions.

NPL Listing History

Our country’s most serious, uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites can be cleaned using federal money. To be eligible for federal cleanup money, a site must be put on the National Priorities List (NPL). This site was proposed to the NPL on June 10, 1986, and formally added to the list on October 4, 1989.

Threats and Contaminants

Ground water is contaminated with various VOCs from former solvent disposal practices, such as: 1) 1,1,1-trichloroethane (TCA); 2) 1,1-dichloroethane (DCA); 3) tetrachloroethene (PCE); 4) trichloroethene (TCE); 5) 1,1-dichloroethene (DCE), vinyl chloride, a degradation product. VOCs also were detected in waters that lead to Manatawny Creek and a tributary to Ironstone Creek. Exposure to contaminated ground water, surface water, and sediments through direct contact or accidental ingestion poses potential risks to individuals. Residential wells are contaminated and threaten drinking water.

Contaminant descriptions and associated risk factors are available on the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry, an arm of the

Cleanup Progress

OU1: Residential Drinking Water

The Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs), CryoChem, Incorporated, C.S. Garber & Sons, Incorporated, and the former owners and operators of CryoChem, Incorporated, were issued a Consent Order in February 1988, to determine the extent of the contamination and to identify alternative cleanup technologies. In 1987, carbon units were installed at 19 homes with wells exceeding acceptable drinking water standards. Some residents have opted to buy bottled water or filtered tap water at their own expense. Other homes were added to this initial installation, bringing the total to 28. As of 2002, 12 residents are using carbon filtration systems. Public involvement resulted in EPA re-evaluating the initial remedy of providing an alternate water supply through extension of the public water lines. EPA determined in a September 1989 that installing and maintaining carbon treatment systems in affected homes would adequately achieve cleanup goals. By Fall of 1991, carbon filters were installed in all 20 affected homes. In September 1996, EPA issued a Unilateral Administrative Order to C.S. Garber & Sons, Inc. for the operation and maintenance of the carbon treatment systems. Currently, Consent Decree negotiations between EPA and the PRPs are underway.

OU2: Groundwater

In a September 1990, EPA selected an additional remedy which involves pumping and treating ground water by air stripping and surface discharge. The Remedial Design for the selected remedy was completed in September 1996. Construction of the remedy was completed in September 1998 and the system is presently maintained by the EPA and their contractors. Ongoing monitoring is being conducted to ensure that air and stream standards are being met and to assist in tracking the contaminant levels in the groundwater. A plume delineation study and technical review are currently underway, to be completed by Summer 2003.

OU3: Soil

In a September 1991, EPA selected a cleanup remedy which would provide for soil vapor extraction in the contaminated area. Soil sampling conducted during the design of this treatment system has found that contamination levels are now non-detectable and no further action is required.

Contacts

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Detailed public files (Administrative Record) on EPA's actions and decisions for this site can be examined at the following locations:

Douglass-Berks Township Building
Douglass Drive
Boyertown, PA 19512

Earl Township Building
19 Schoolhouse Road
Boyertown, PA 19512

U.S. EPA Region III
Administrative Record Room
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103